

NEWS RELEASE

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginians should prepare now for winter weather

Complex weather event will affect the Commonwealth this weekend

RICHMOND, Va. – Most of Virginia is likely to experience winter weather this weekend, and residents should take actions now to be ready for possible power outages and challenging road conditions.

“With a forecast that includes sleet, light snow and potentially significant freezing rain, we strongly encourage citizens to pay attention to their local forecasts throughout the weekend,” said Michael Cline, state coordinator of emergency management. “The best advice for staying safe during winter weather is to get where you need to be before the weather gets bad.”

Follow these safety tips for winter weather:

Emergency supplies

- Be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for at least three days, in case roads are blocked and/or there are power outages.
- A three-day supply of food includes a gallon of water per person per day and food that does not require electricity to prepare it.
- A battery powered and/or hand-crank radio and extra batteries will provide emergency information. Be sure to listen to local stations for weather and emergency information.
- Have flashlights and extra batteries on hand. Don't use candles when the power is out.
- Get more details and an emergency supply checklist at www.ReadyVirginia.gov or on the Ready Virginia mobile app.

Driving

- Roads can become very hazardous very quickly. Only travel if absolutely necessary, and if you do, wear a seat belt.
- Know road conditions before you leave. Road condition information is available 24/7 by calling 511 or going to www.511Virginia.org.
- Even after roads have been treated with salt and/or sand, drivers should reduce speed and keep a safe driving distance from other vehicles on the road.
- Driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, ice is likely, especially on bridges, ramps and overpasses.
- Put emergency supplies in your car. Use an old backpack or small container. If you become stranded, you will need water and non-perishable food; blankets, hats and mittens; a flashlight and extra batteries; and a whistle to blow to get attention. Other items to include are an ice scraper, can of deicer spray, jumper cables and road flares or a bright LED light that attaches to

the vehicle, a bright colored cloth to use as a flag, hand wipes and paper towels, and a small first aid kit. Add a bag of kitty litter or sand for extra weight in your vehicle and also to use for traction in case you get stuck.

- Stay with your car. The Virginia Department of Transportation recommends running the car engine for heat for 10 minutes and then turning off the engine for 20 minutes.

Emergency heat

- If you use space heaters, plug them directly into wall sockets – don't use extension cords. Keep space heaters at least three feet from furniture, bedding and draperies. Don't leave space heaters unattended, and turn them off when you go to bed or leave your home.
- Generators should always be run outside, in well-ventilated areas. Follow manufacturer's directions exactly. Get to fresh air immediately if you start to feel sick, weak or dizzy.
- Kerosene and propane heaters can cause fires if left unsupervised. If you use one, use only the recommended fuel. Always refuel outdoors safely away from your home.
- Have your fireplace and wood stove chimneys inspected and cleaned. These often build up creosote, which is the residue left behind by burning wood. Creosote is flammable and must be professionally removed.

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